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**Co-opting the streets of Liverpool: the role of local authorities in facilitating community-led planning**

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# **Co-Opting the Streets of Liverpool: Self-Organization and the Role of Local Authorities**

Within the context of austerity politics, there is an increasing emphasis on regeneration initiatives that originate in civil society itself. While community-led contributions are supported by local authorities for their self-organisation and empowerment of communities, ownership of the planning process allows the local authority to retain power over the community, and subsequently co-opt initiatives in the interest of their own wider regeneration plans. However, given communities often lack resources, the involvement of the local authority is often necessary to ensure future development. This paper argues that this dynamic places community-led schemes at risk of co-optation, meaning plans are community-outsourced rather than facilitating the potential of self-organisation by communities.

Keywords: self-organization; community planning; regeneration; Liverpool

## **Introduction**

Within the context of austerity politics, there is an increasing interest in planning strategies that activate the potential of non-state actors in the regeneration of post-industrial cities (Oosterlynk & Gonzáles, 2013; Williams et al., 2014; Uitermark, 2015; Savini, 2016). For decades, governments have invested in urban regeneration in the UK and elsewhere with some success (Ward, 2004; Couch *et al.*, 2011). In spite of this, the challenges of derelict sites and deprived neighbourhoods have not disappeared and continue to be unviable for profit-oriented development. Communities are increasingly expected to step in, with greater responsibility for shaping and delivering public goods devolved to local citizens and support given to new forms of community-led initiative.

The concept of community-led planning is typically discussed as a form of self-organization in planning research. This idea refers to initiatives that originate in civil society itself via autonomous community-based networks of citizens outside

government control (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011). Top-down planning initiatives have been heavily criticized by planning scholars as failing to adequately identify and address the problems within civil society (e.g. Healey, 1997; Innes & Booher, 2000; Boonstra & Boelens, 2011). Advocates of a self-organization approach argue that increased community involvement from citizens or businesses help address these problems and provide greater efficiency in urban regeneration initiatives. As community-led initiatives form and develop in their local communities, they are perceived as more likely to identify the problems and solutions to the problems of the local area. Further, the involvement of local stakeholders creates an additional commitment, increasing the quality of implementation of the plans. The phenomenon of self-organization is generally receiving increased attention within planning theory (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Portugali, 2011; Moroni, 2015; Rauws *et al.*, 2016).

The apparent rise in community-led initiatives and increased emphasis on self-organization creates a challenge to traditional structures of planning governance for local authorities. A contradiction exists in that community-led initiatives are formed outside of the traditional planning system, yet planning remains within governmental control, creating potential conflicts and power imbalances. Boonstra and Boelens (2011, p. 118) argue that ‘to overcome the problematic encounters between planning and society, the acknowledgement and incorporation of self-organization in planning might be a successful next step’. The authors argue that this may require a shift in planning practice, treating planning as a process and outcome rather than as a pre-defined or conditional system with which self-organisation has to comply. This suggests a role of facilitation rather than control, yet community-led initiatives have often evolved under the ‘shadow of hierarchy’ where control and power over their formation and development can be exercised (Nederhand et al., 2016).

The purpose of this research is to determine the extent to which local authorities are facilitating community-led regeneration efforts. Based on a study of two recent urban regeneration initiatives in Liverpool, the paper argues that while community-led initiatives are being acknowledged and incorporated into planning by the local authority, ownership of the planning process means authorities retain power over the community. Communities can be encouraged through interaction, protection and government intervention to enact their own plans, however, operate under predefined boundaries of larger regeneration schemes. Therefore, a divide exists in an area between people and place. The facilitation of regeneration schemes depends on whether and how they relate to the wider framework of local authority plans. The question of whether the facilitation of community regeneration from the authority benefits the community is raised, with evidence suggesting that governmental priorities lie with the advocacy of their own plans, rather than the effects it has on the community. It concludes that local authorities are able to exercise control over community-led regeneration schemes, often compromising their independence and resulting in the 'outsourcing' of planning responsibilities to communities.

### **Self-Organization and the Role of Local Authorities**

There has been a steady development in the role of the public in planning processes since the landmark contributions of planning scholars in the 1960s challenged the autocratic mindset of planning and demanded new forms of participation (Jacobs, 1961; Davidoff, 1965; Arnstein, 1969). Drawing on the ideas of Habermas, communicative or collaborative planning theory evolved as a new planning paradigm in the 1990s, picking up some of the ideas of these early planning theorists (e.g. Forrester, 1989, 1993; Healey 1992, 1997; Innes, 1995). Rejecting the top-down rational planning paradigm and recognising the challenge of interaction between diverse sets of actors in planning

processes, these approaches centre on the power of dialogue and mutual learning in order to find joint solutions to policy problems.

Within a collaborative approach, a plan is more likely to succeed given that it is, in theory, a consensus agreement (Gunton & Day, 2003). Similarly, a collaborative plan has a greater intrinsic chance of being in the public interest given the greater input of the public (Frame *et al.*, 2004). However, the extent to which this is practically applicable has been questioned (Frame *et al.*, 2004; Allmendinger, 2017). Communities can be diverse and subject to imbalances in power and resource. Collaborative processes may favour more powerful stakeholders, with Allmendinger (2017) arguing that those with more natural professional skills such as negotiating or bargaining, who do not necessarily represent the entire community, are more likely to be influential. Frame *et al.* (2004) similarly claim that tactics such as delays or the pursuit of alternative means to achieve their objectives can be utilized if a party does not like the outcome of collaboration (Frame *et al.*, 2004).

A further critique of collaborative planning practices relates to its relationship with public authorities. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) argue that planning decisions typically operate under a set of governmental preconditions, meaning outcomes often prescribe a predetermined 'problem definition'. Inclusion exists on the basis that stakeholders are often predetermined through a manipulation of the process, the issues at stake and the context in which they are addressed dictated by the decision-making authority and the use of area-based policies means geographic divisions. These inclusions create governmental path dependencies in which the authority remains central, meaning overarching decision-making power over stakeholders. Conclusions are therefore often unrepresentative of the diversity present in civil society, creating difficulties in spatial policy. This critique of state-led planning concludes that for spatial

planning initiatives to properly reflect issues in civil society, they must be formed autonomously from within society itself.

There is a growing body of literature advocating this new approach in planning, emphasizing self-organization (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011; Portugali, 2011; Moroni, 2015; Rauws *et al.*, 2016). Self-organization can be defined as initiatives for spatial interventions that originate via autonomous community-based networks of citizens, outside government control (Boonstra & Boelens, 2011). It is distinct to participatory theories before it in that there is no intended collaboration; rather it is the result of a spontaneous process in which no thematic, geographic or procedural definitions exist. While the spontaneity of self-organization and the coordination of spatial planning contrast in approach, self-organization theory does not reject planning. Rauws *et al.* (2016, p. 246) argue that self-organized communities do not exist outside of planning processes, as ‘it is up to the planner to present arguments on what the consequences are of such combinations under the conditions of a particular situation’. In other words, contrasting traditional participatory methods, plans are generated through the public while consultation is completed by the authority, rather than vice versa.

Increased involvement of civil society in determining public plans has advantages. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) note several significant effects: first, greater power for civil society can empower local citizens and devolve control, responsibility, and accountability for local communities to its residents. Planners operate with imperfect information when addressing societal needs, whereas self-organized planning initiatives may be better placed to identify and respond to specific local needs and problems. However, this remains dependent on communities possessing the capability, skills and resources to respond to needs effectively. It is therefore necessary that

authorities, in their role of responsibility for the planning system, facilitate the ability of citizens to mobilize within urban development.

An outcome of this growth of community-led planning initiatives is a reassessment of the role of governments within the planning process. Alongside the benefits of self-organization, inefficiencies of traditional centrally planned participation have been highlighted. Boonstra and Boelens (2011) argue that government-led participation creates three major problems which often cause its failure. Procedures can be time-consuming and become exclusive in the interests of efficiencies, the political system relies on a predetermined set of premises that sets the framework for the activities, and there can be a lack of democratic distribution of authority and responsibility to local people. In a study of large-scale projects in the urban fringe, Majoor (2009, p. 1400) found that attempts to create more vibrant urban environments were often 'disconnected from important societal forces' and that 'including a wider array of parties and individuals ... seems to be the only way to transform this planning concept towards a more successful implementation in a more truly citizens-oriented urban sense'.

The question then becomes which role government has to play within planning processes. Boonstra and Boelens (2011, p. 118) argue that 'decisive shifts' are needed within the planning process for governments to adapt to self-organization in planning, including shifts from generic indicators and measurable outcomes to an expectation that there will be unexpected and unplanned outcomes, and acceptance that planning may be complex and unwieldy rather than pre-conditioned and defined. However, the implications of such a shift must be considered. A reduction in public funding on a local level can lead to an over-reliance on community-led planning. Sawhney *et al.* (2015, p. 340) claim that 'it is becoming an attractive scenario as local governments experience

budget shortfalls and look to offload certain functions of maintenance and services on to residents'. While this in itself can be positive, Boonstra and Boelens (2011) claim that 'government administrations do not seem to be very open to initiatives that emerge from the dynamics of civil society itself'. Using examples in Amsterdam and Amersfoort, Nederhand *et al.* (2016) show how governments can facilitate self-organized community efforts while still exercising state power. Resources such as authority, money, information and knowledge allow authorities to intervene in a hierarchical way, due to the resource dependency of other actors.

Changing circumstances have created the need to redefine the role of government within planning procedures. Empowerment of the public through greater networks, increased information and enhanced technical capacity have led to a rise in the number of community-led initiatives. Public participation and the origin of planning decisions within society itself have, in theory, benefits. However, the planning process is ultimately a governance structure which provides oversight and accountability. Therefore, without an anarchistic overhaul of the planning system, all planning initiatives will inevitably involve local authorities.

This research is based on the assumption that there is a large degree of potential within civil society to be mobilized to contribute to urban development, and authorities embrace self-organized efforts given limited resources. However, authorities prefer to control the outcomes of the regeneration efforts to conform to the aspirations of the authority itself. As authorities possess the ability to dictate outcomes of community-led regeneration efforts, community-led regeneration efforts may be co-opted. This theoretical development represents a further shift in public participation in planning, with the concept of 'community-led' plans becoming 'community-outsourced' plans. In



the following we study in two case studies how the local authority facilitates self-organisation and how this was received by the communities in question.

### **Case Studies from the ‘Streets’ of Liverpool**

The city of Liverpool has a long history of self-organization, particularly in the fields of housing and community development. New cooperative forms of housing emerged in the 1970s, based on principles of collaboration and participation, and received funding support from local government. This movement has been referred to by Thompson (2018, p. 5) as ‘one of the largest working-class movements in co-operative housing in British, if not European, history’, as it aimed to empower residents in the design, management and decision-making of their housing and represented a shift in urban governance in a city where housing had historically been provided through municipal and private mechanisms. These principles of democratic decision-making and self-organization are also reflected in contemporary examples of community-led planning in Liverpool, including new forms of community land trusts such as Granby which are not-for independent, non-profit organisations that aim to embed community control and ownership of planning into the process, management and outcomes of neighbourhood-based regeneration, particularly affordable housing (Moore, 2018).

The relationship with local government is a uniting theme between historical and contemporary examples of community-led planning in Liverpool. In the 1980s, Liverpool’s co-operative housing movement was confronted by governance shifts that undermined emerging forms of collaborative housing activism. Political changes within the local authority led to a loss of support for the co-operative movement, as a locally governing Labour Party effectively municipalized all co-ops in development in the city, which worked in tandem with neoliberal policy reforms that affected funding regimes (Thompson, 2020). More contemporary examples have emerged in opposition to

regeneration efforts perceived to be undemocratic and lacking in commitment to genuine community influence and participation in planning processes (Moore, 2014; Thompson, 2020), where local authorities may have been perceived as potentially antagonistic to community-led development, yet also viewed as important partners in facilitating community-led planning given their decision-making role in the English planning system.

This history of community-led planning provides important context for our case studies. Local authorities can be crucial partners for community-led planning, providing philosophical, financial and decision-making support, yet this support is vulnerable to shifts in political control, attitude, and approach at local and national levels, which in turn can affect the funding and resourcing of self-organization in planning. This has been further emphasized in the last decade by the city's relationship with political commitments to community empowerment at a national level, expressed through the Conservative Government's ideas around localism and the 'big society'. The central tenets of these were to give communities more control over public life and services, including planning processes, through new mechanisms of empowerment. Liverpool was chosen as a pilot area for this initiative, yet the local authority withdrew followed vast cuts to public spending and local authority budgets. This highlights that self-organization does not occur or flourish in a vacuum, but rather is dependent on a range of influences and partners acting at different scales of governance that can affect its impact on both planning processes and the communities it aims to benefit.

It is within this context that our case studies were explored. The research was undertaken using a multiple case study approach of Granby 'Four Streets' and the managing Community Land Trust (CLT), and the 'Ten Streets' Regeneration scheme, both located in Liverpool. The two cases were studied to identify consistent patterns of

facilitating behaviour and to uncover themes within local authorities' attitudes towards self-organizing regeneration schemes. For each case study, the manner in which the local authority facilitated the community to contribute to urban development was analysed and then compared to identify common themes. Similar time-periods were required to ensure the wider socio-economic and political context remained the same. Both cases were chosen post-2010, when the current Conservative administration gained control, which coincided with significant financial cuts to the authority.

While both cases are examples of community-driven regeneration, there are differences within the initiators of the self-organization. Granby Community Land Trust is an example of community-based initiative that led to a self-organized community trust. The second case of Ten Streets, located in an area known locally as the 'North Shore', is an example of a process of self-organizing regeneration co-opted by a local authority. Initially developing out of organic community regeneration, the project ultimately evolved into a government-led framework working alongside private developers, planners and architects which seeks to facilitate future citizen contribution to urban development. Any patterns that emerge from the contrasting case studies are an indication of the attitudes and facilitating methods of Liverpool City Council (Patton, 1990).

Qualitative data in the form of interviews was gathered to test the hypothesis. An interpretivist approach was used to analyse the data, seeking to understand the wider social and political context which affected local authority's decision making through engagement with relevant actors. The research findings are based on eight interviews that were conducted with key actors involved in the regenerating process in July and August 2018. For Granby, interviewees included a current member of the CLT, a Council representative and co-optee on the board of the CLT, and a professional from a

service provider, working with the CLT. For Ten Streets, interviewees included three active enterprises in the area, two Council representatives and a planner who provided planning services on the project. A semi-structured interview format was used to allow the interviewee freedom to discuss their individual opinions on the relationship between local authority and community. All interviews were recorded and transcribed, except one where the request was turned down.

The research is designed to contribute to existing theory of self-organization in urban regeneration through empirical analysis of relevant contemporary cases and expands on the theory through the exploration of the idea of ‘community-outsourcing’ through the use of instrumental case studies (Stake, 1995). While the cases are limited to the area of Liverpool, the research provides theoretical outcomes in the form of ‘community-outsourced’ planning, and the behaviours found can be used to provide evidence in support of the theory. However, generalized conclusions with regards to the behaviour of local authorities across the UK cannot be made. Given the wide range of external factors, which influence the success of any urban regeneration initiatives, in order for these theoretical insights to be generalized on a larger scale, they would need empirical validation in the context of other local authorities’ facilitation of self-organizing initiatives (Stake, 1995).

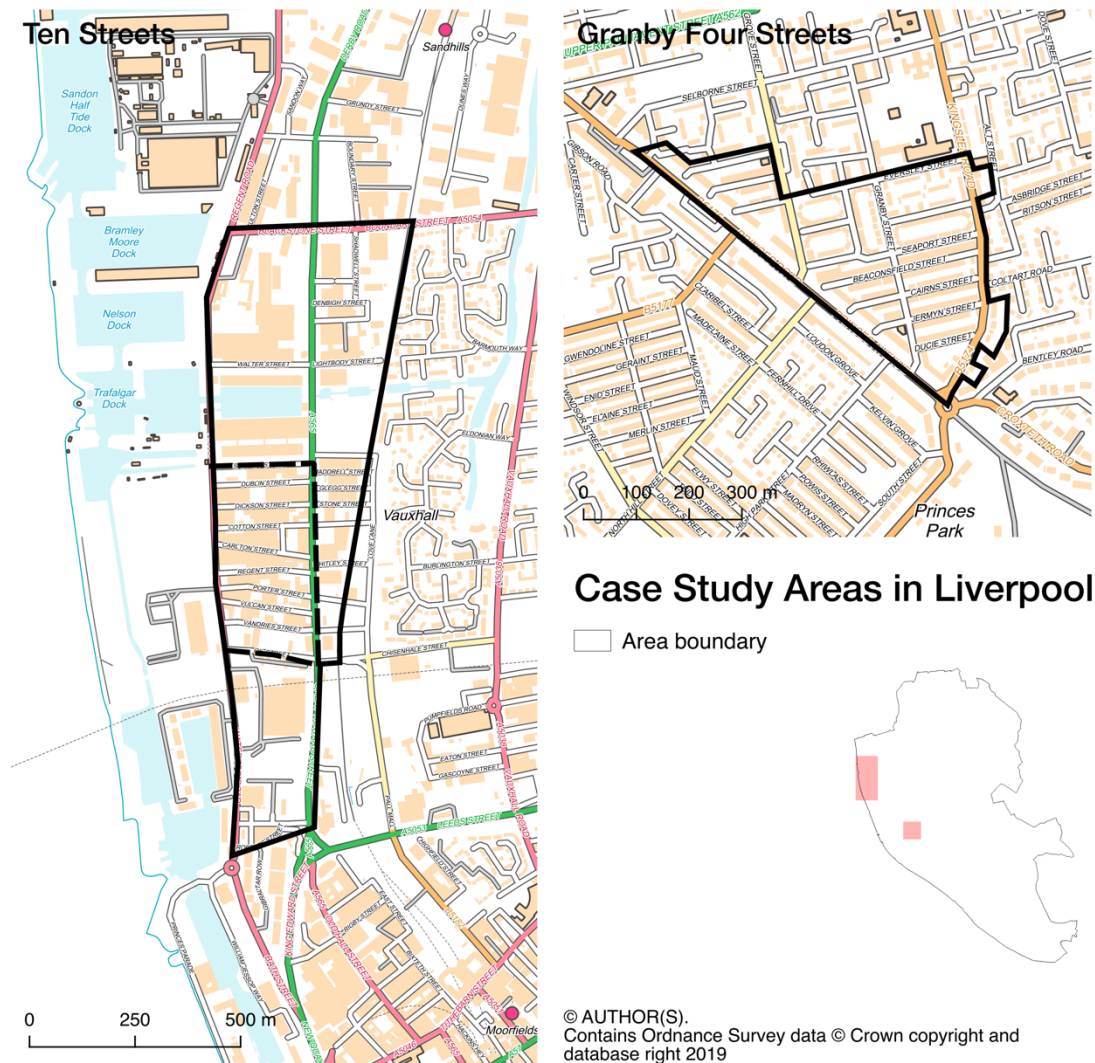


Figure 1. Location of case study areas in Liverpool.

### **Ten Streets: ‘They never asked me anything’**

Ten Streets is a large-scale regeneration scheme located in Liverpool’s northern fringe, adjacent to derelict docks. The previously vibrant area was blighted following the 1981 recession, which led to the closure of nearby docks, local factories and subsequently ancillary business within the area. The Ten Streets Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF) area occupies a strategically important location between Liverpool city centre and Liverpool Superport, and neighbours Peel’s larger Liverpool Waters regeneration scheme. The location lies within a number of framework areas, including Liverpool

City Centre Strategic Investment Framework, Liverpool City Enterprise Zone and the Atlantic Corridor Development Framework. The name is derived from ten parallel streets that form the heart of the regeneration project and are the focus of this case study.

Following the recession and the availability of cheap property, a small number of businesses began relocating to the Ten Streets area. Within this period, there were a number of previous attempts to regenerate the area, although none of them successful (interview Business #1). In recent years, a number of creative industries have set up or relocated to the area, which began an organic regeneration process, commonly believed amongst interviewees to be a result of Liverpool's existing city centre creative area, the Baltic Triangle, being 'full' (interview Business #1, Council Representative #1).

The organic regeneration, alongside the redevelopment of the nearby Stanley Dock complex by a private developer in 2016, acted as a trigger for focused involvement from the Council (interview Council Representative #1). In October 2016, Cabinet endorsed the Atlantic Corridor Development Framework document which establishes an overarching context for regeneration and development for the wider framework area. The Development Framework identified the Ten Streets Investment Cluster as a potential economic driver and connector.

Ten ideas were formulated in conjunction with the developer by defining key characteristics within the North Shore area and synthesizing them into a vision (Liverpool City Council, 2018a; interviews Planner, Council Representative #1, and Businesses #1, #2 and #3). These ideas were launched at an event in February 2017 to the members of the North Shore community. The launch was attended by circa 200 people, which included a variety of local stakeholders in the area. Following the launch,

the ‘Ten Big Ideas’ were given a consultation period which involved four public events resulting in feedback from over 200 respondents.

A Spatial Regeneration Framework (SRF) was created to establish a series of development principles to direct the Ten Streets area. The SRF was derived from the ten defining attributes of the area and intends to ensure that the distinctive character of the area is preserved (Liverpool City Council, 2018a). The development principles for the area include retaining traditional employment businesses and encouraging creative businesses and employability, managing the height and scale of new buildings with respect to street hierarchy into the city fringe, and preservation of heritage assets and listed buildings (Liverpool City Council, 2018a). The framework was adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document in February 2018.

Much of the scheme depends upon the continuation of the organic regeneration process that defined the area prior to council involvement. The Council note the organic inflow of new creative organizations into the Ten Streets zone, alongside the renovation and development of the Stanley Dock complex within the initial stages of the plan. The recognition of this area characteristic allows the process of community-led to become a definition of the plans later stages, with the SRF encouraging ‘new forms of business and those with ideas that can add to the originality and vibrancy of Ten Streets’ (Liverpool City Council, 2018a, p. 24). Following Council involvement, stringent definitions are applied as to the type of business allowed to relocate to the area which focus primarily on creative and digital industries and employability.

These definitions have shaped developed since the launch of the framework. For example, a local hotel company attempted to expand to a property within the Ten Streets region, however, were informed that under the area’s Character Principles, planning permission would be rejected. Further, a property owned by a mixed martial

arts organization nearby the Ten Streets boundary was due for demolition by the local authority. The Council helped to relocate the business to within the boundary area, conditional on adherence to the Council plans for the area.

To encourage community participation in the scheme, methods of communication have been set up by the Council ensuring that information on relevant events and updates on the scheme are publicly available, and stakeholders receive direct information via email, a twitter account, a website, and a presentation at the North Liverpool business forum (interview Council Representative #1). Further, a two-tier organizational structure has been set up by the local authority to include representatives from the area.

Despite this, the scheme was criticized by local businesses due to a lack of community involvement (interviews Business #1, #2 and #3). Despite a recognition of the impact local businesses had on the scheme, no interviewees were aware of the existence the project until immediately prior to the launch event containing the Ten Big Ideas, when informed by another member of the community (interviews Business #1, #2 and #3). It is recognized by the project officer that ‘one of the most difficult things we’ve faced ... [is] trying to get the message to everyone who has an interest’ (interview Council Representative #1). The difficulty of this is partially attributed to the limited staff resource on the project, which ‘is spread thin’ (interview Council Representative #1).

The lack of involvement has led to concerns that local businesses may no longer have a future in the area. Whilst the benefits to the area are of the scheme are recognized, the Council’s involvement has generally been poorly received, with Council Representative #1 recognizing that the authority are ‘viewed in a very negative light and people think we have come in to ruin everything’. It was commonly believed that the



increased attention caused by Council co-optation has and will lead to rent increases, meaning that the businesses who helped grow the area will need to relocate. It was speculated that had the businesses been made aware from the beginning, greater protection in the form of long-term leases or methods of Council intervention could have secured the existing businesses in the long-term (interviews Business #1, Business #2, Business #3, Council Representative #1).

The reception has been compounded by poor communication, due both to mistakes from the authority and the spread of information within the area. In a draft framework published 2017, a mapping error stated the proposed 'positive intervention and re-use' of a multi-purpose gallery, live performance space and recording hub. This led to a public backlash, and the venue stated that the designation 'has shocked many in the community ... all worried that this beloved and necessary space would be lost'. This has since been corrected but further misconceptions remain. For example, business #3 stated that the framework was powerless to prevent a potential private development to be built in Ten Streets, while Council Representative #2 stated that it will be refused by the Council. Poor communication, as well as a perceived lack of consideration of local needs and an exclusion from the process have all led to concerns over the scheme.

In some instances, this concern may be legitimate. For example, prior to the launch of the Ten Streets scheme, a business in the area was in negotiations to purchase land that was leased. Following its launch, the landlord received an offer from a third party up to 'three times' higher than expected. However, the Council recognize that due to the nearby developments, including the Stanley Dock regeneration, Peel's Liverpool Waters scheme, road improvements and a proposed new football stadium, action was required within the area (interview Council Representatives #1 and #2). Despite the

framework intending to avoid problems of displacement evident in the nearby Baltic Triangle area, increased external attention has led to negative consequences.

While this is unintended, concerns are raised over the business orientations identified within the document and the extent to which they reflect the local community. The vision for the area states an aspiration to ‘nurture existing assets and opportunities that are unique to this part of the city’, highlighted in the SRF as a ‘place that fosters creativity and innovation’ (Liverpool City Council, 2018a, p. 19). The scheme intentionally focuses on creativity, digital and employability (Council Representative #2). However, the area is home to a number of industrial, engineering, metalwork and maritime industries. While the SRF does state that it intends to protect traditional non-creative businesses in the area, the potential for displacement was apparent within the interviews. A planner (interview) involved in the scheme suggests that while no existing use is getting ‘kicked out’ of the area, ‘some ... were felt aren’t particularly good neighbours, and there might be a situation where they could be relocated’. Council Representative #2 suggests that no preconceived ideas exist over businesses who do not necessarily fit the ideas: ‘it’s digital, it’s cultural and it’s employment. ... Do the scrapyards stay or go? I don’t know’ (interview Council Representative #2).

This emphasis on creative industries is apparent within the engagement between the Council and local businesses. Businesses identified within the SRF comprise largely of creative industries who have recently set up in or relocated to the area. Further, a two-tier organizational structure has been set up between the Council and the area, however representatives from the area lean heavily on the creative businesses who have occupied the area within the last three years, rather than the remaining majority.

### **Granby Four Streets: ‘We See them as a Key Partner’**

After a long-term period of decline, regeneration efforts of Liverpool City Council and

the community are attempting to make Granby ‘a vibrant, busy neighbourhood where people want to live once again’ (CCIN Housing Commission, 2017). Granby is an inner-city ward within the south-central area of Toxteth, known for its ethnic diversity, cultural heritage and faded architectural grandeur (Thompson, 2015). A traditionally and particularly deprived area of Liverpool, Granby was allocated for large-scale demolition and refurbishment under the Housing Market Renewal Initiative, launched by the National Government in 2002 as a strategy to renew failing housing markets (Nevin, 2010). Following a withdrawal of funding for the HMRI in 2011 by the Conservative-led government, the face of Granby was one of vacant land and empty tinned-up properties.

In 2002 the HMRI began, identifying the Four Streets as a potential site for demolition and refurbishment. However, following the withdrawal of government funding for the HMRI scheme, the neighbourhood was left derelict. The community began self-organizing through small-scale interventions to improve the area, such as guerrilla gardening and painting alleyways, moving away from the usual processes with the local authority to take control (Simon, 2017). Plans were created for an urban regeneration solution that could work better than the large-scale government interventions. Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust (CLT) was established in 2011 to recognize and formalize the communities’ stake in the area.

In 2012, in partnership with a range of stakeholders, the Council launched a £14m regeneration scheme returning 110 empty properties to use. The Four Streets’ tender was originally won by a private contractor, but within six months little had materialized of their progress to redevelop the streets and the council terminated the contract. Following a £500,000 interest-free loan from a private investor, Liverpool City

Council began discussions with the CLT, who partnered with a number of housing associations and developed a plan that would regenerate the derelict houses.

A vision for the area was developed and defined by local residents and key stakeholders, before being adopted by the City Council. This vision was defined as ‘to grow into a diverse residential neighbourhood, interspersed with small-scale local business and quality public spaces ... retaining and refurbishing as much of the existing built fabric as possible celebrating the areas character and using this to create a distinctive and desirable place to live, work and play’ (Liverpool City Council, 2014). The CLT were instrumental in the creation of the Granby Vision, and are key members on the Granby Stakeholders board, which allows the exchange of key information regarding the scheme and the provision of feedback on issues which affect the area.

The influence the CLT has shown over the area includes the refurbishment of 13 houses, the redevelopment of two adjacent properties as an urban indoor garden and communal space, and the restoration of four former shops in the area (interview CLT Member). For the CLT to have sufficient funds to purchase the properties, the Council provided a loan and 11 of 132 derelict houses owned by the Council were transferred to the CLT. In particular, Council Representative #3 supported the CLT through the process of transferring the houses from the Council to the CLT. The loan provided by the authority meant that additional finance raised could be used to renovate properties and other community schemes.

The Council ensure that the CLT has a say within the regeneration of the wider area. The Council co-optee attends CLT board meetings and shares information from the Council, as well as informing the CLT any statutory consultation process on neighbouring schemes where possible, so that they can respond to plans formally (interview Council Representative #3). Further, the Council Co-optee stated that the

Council has helped facilitate smaller projects such as the street market, through interventions such as road closures, and planning and building control assistance for the Winter Garden scheme.

However, Council involvement is not necessarily welcomed by the CLT. The relationship between Granby residents and the City Council were historically tense prior to the launch of the scheme in 2012 (interviews Council Representative #3 and Cooperative Advisor). This tense relationship has continued following the formation of the CLT, with CLT Member stating that '[the Council] have always been against what we've done and, as a residents association, they've treated us really badly' (interview).

Scepticism exists with CLT Member over the relationship with the local authority, with CLT Member stating 'we manage to stop things as opposed to us getting them to do things and they manage to stop us doing things in a timely manner' (interview). It is recognized that the Council are needed to facilitate the CLT schemes through the provision of support and planning services. However various issues were raised in the interview highlighting a perceived negative treatment in comparison to housing associations, as well as Council governance and mistakes causing delays to CLT projects. It is stated that 'we have to work with them and we have to look like it's okay to work with them, so we say we work in conjunction with the council'. Despite there theoretically being a more collaborative and co-operative process between the community and local authority, Council involvement has there been sceptically received.

This scepticism is partially driven by perceptions of the local authority's interests. CLT Member believes that the co-optation process began once benefits existed for the authority: 'the council didn't want us and ignored what we were doing until we started to get prizes from Britain in Bloom ... they'd come along and get

photos taken and then it's hard for them to object'. While the CLT Member believes that the unprofitable nature of the CLT means that the Council have not attempted to help them, it is argued by the community development co-ordinator, Michael Simon, that Council co-operation began 'because we attracted private investment, but they had no money to do anything' (Simon, 2017, p. 162).

Following problems with previous tenders and an increasingly austere period for Local Authorities meant that the CLT vision, and in particular financial model, became more favourable in the eyes of Liverpool City Council (Thompson, 2017). The financial capacity of the CLT is acknowledged by Council Representative #3 (interview):

'they've become very adept at accessing various funding streams. We see them as a key partner in the area'. CLT Member (interview) noted that 'when they talk about helping residents renovate housing, they've given us a loan. Not a grant. But we are great for photo opportunities'.

The Council's interest in the wider regeneration of the area has on occasion clashed with local interest. CLT Member was dissatisfied over the potential appointed developer for property on Ducie Street. The developer has been in discussions with the City Council for over two years and have a deal conditional on several factors, including funding. However, there are concerns from the CLT over a lack of tender process, the credibility of the company, and the relationship between Liverpool's mayor and the company, although this is disputed by Council Representative #3. While the developer who provided the initial loan to the CLT were in negotiations for the Ducie Street properties prior to West Tree's involvement, this was prevented by a request for a Council contribution to the scheme.

Given Granby CLT's limited resource, there are restrictions to their ability to make large-scale changes to housing within the area. The Council's involvement can

therefore provide benefits to the area. Council Representative #2 argues that following the end of HMRI, the properties remained empty for circa twenty years and they have not been approached with a viable alternative option. While a desire exists from West Tree to include the CLT within the process, facilitated through Council Representative #2, it is recognised that the scheme 'has not been necessarily welcomed with open arms, they would have liked to have seen other options' (interview). Concerns now exist from within the CLT over issues of gentrification, as plans that originate outside of the community proceed (interview CLT Member).

### **Community-Led or Community-Outsourced Regeneration?**

In both case studies, Liverpool City Council made conscious efforts to facilitate the community to encourage growth within the area. The local authority was found to have identified the community regeneration efforts and provided resources to protect and grow the ability of the community to enact change.

The spontaneity of self-organization means a lack of certainty, and in the case of Ten Streets, there was precedent suggesting the dangers of organic growth without protection going forward. The Council cited the problems faced by the Baltic Triangle, an area with a different land designation but with an obvious relationship in terms of new industry. Without some sort of authority protection, there existed a significant danger that the Ten Streets would encounter similar problems of land price, displacement and land use concerns. The framework allows the council 'teeth' to control new development within the area.

Within the Granby area, plans initially existed to provide the houses to a lead developer. Given Granby CLT's limited resource, they are not in a position to make large-scale changes to housing within the area. Under the facilitation of the local authority, they have been afforded an influential role in the regeneration of the area. The

presence of the local authority can provide protection of the existing characteristics and ensure future development from a statutory perspective so long as the interests of the community are fully considered. However, despite facilitation of community efforts, community-*led* efforts, in which the community have the controlling stake, were not considerably enabled. All efforts to encourage residents to enact their own self-organised regeneration efforts were part of wider regeneration schemes defined and owned by the Council. Although the local authority was but one of many actors within the regeneration scheme, resources such as authority, information and definition of planning processes created a hierarchical decision-making structure, whilst still being reliant on the community for the identification and delivery of much of the scheme.

This co-optation was often to the detriment of the schemes. Within the Ten Streets, there was a concern amongst the residents of the potential for direct displacement, the process where tenants move because of rent increase or pressure from landlords. The marketing of the area from the Council to external investors has speculatively increased land prices. Given that many organizations within the area are short-term leaseholders, they may face increased rent or relocation from the area. Further, the CLT often highlighted Council barriers to the implementation of their plans.

The level of Council interest within community-led regeneration is evidently increased when the community can contribute to the Councils' own goals. For the period 2013–2033, Liverpool's housing requirement is 29,600 net additional dwellings (Liverpool City Council, 2018b). In 2012, the City had 7,000 empty homes, with a mayoral pledge in 2012 to bring 1,000 back into use (Liverpool City Council, 2012). The Granby area presented an opportunity to bring 132 of these back into use, and while they CLT builds only 11 homes, it contributes positively to the city vision.



Relationships were noted as tense with the residents of Granby prior to their active involvement, while there is still a dependence on larger property developers to deliver additional refurbishment in the area despite the objections of smaller housing associations (interview Cooperative Advisor).

The focus on creative schemes within Ten Streets was derived from a wider need for a new creative area within Liverpool. Therefore, the prominence of the creative industries within the plan over more traditional businesses evident in the area is reflective of a vision for, rather than evaluation of the area. The use of creativity as causal mechanism for urban regeneration has become common within cities (Costa *et al.*, 2008), and ensuring economic growth within the city centre through supporting the creative and digital sector is noted as a priority within Liverpool's *Local Plan*. However, given the current less than proportional occupancy of creative industries within the area, the SRF can be seen to have been used as a resource to co-opt the growth of the area in the interests of the Council over the community. In this sense, Council interest in schemes can be seen as an 'outsourcing' of the authorities own planning ambitions onto pre-existing community schemes to carry out much of the work under a wider Council framework.

Several external factors were identified as impacting the relationship between the authority and the community, which may impact the manner in which the cooperation is perceived. First, a lack of resource created problems. Within the Ten Streets, a lack of engagement with the community was consistently noted amongst the interviewees from the area. This is acknowledged by the Council Representative #1, who claimed that a lack of human resource meant that detached methods of engagement, chiefly social media platforms such as Twitter, were used: 'there's about 200 businesses ... how do you try to engage that volume when there's so few of us, it's

pretty much me' (Council Representative #1). This meant a natural lesser role in the process, leading to a greater perception of co-optation, rather than cooperation.

Second, the cost of human error caused friction between the authority and the community. In both cases, significant issues raised with the City Council regarded miscommunication. For example, the CLT possessed refurbished housing for 14 months that could be sold due to license issues, due to what they believe to be incorrect information provided by the Council. While the Council argue that they have facilitated the CLT refurbishment of the houses in spite of the license issues (interview Council Representative #3), it has damaged the relationship between the two. A frictional relationship may alter the roles of each party within the relationship.

Finally, the importance of political clout was evident. The Deputy Mayor was significantly involved in the formation of the Granby CLT and is the former chair of the monthly stakeholder meetings. Council Representative #3 illustrated the impact this had on the involvement of the Council to the community, stating that he was 'under no illusions that Granby is a priority'. This may have externally impacted the level of involvement of the authority. These three factors affected the facilitation of the case studies both positively and negatively and are likely to appear in most case studies on the subject.

## **Conclusion**

The growing number of regeneration initiatives emerging from civil society itself, outside of government processes requires answers as to how local authorities are facilitating community-led regeneration efforts. The current body of research on self-organization seeks to explain the phenomenon and its position within the future of the planning system. Inferences into the topic were made from the literature to suggest that self-organization and community-led regeneration efforts are positive for both

authorities and society. However, these efforts are left open to exploitation. A limited amount has been written on how local authorities are interacting with communities to encourage community-led efforts.

The findings of this study help to contribute to this gap in the literature by illustrating the relationship between a local authority and two forms of community-led regeneration within its boundaries. The results show that active facilitation does exist when local authorities recognize a community regeneration scheme. In both cases, local authorities interacted with communities, protected characteristics of the area and offered varying degrees of intervention. However, facilitation was found to be a form of outsourcing implementation to communities, partially as a result of limited Council funding to physically intervene in areas. Authorities are able to use specific resources such as authority, information and planning process to intervene in a hierarchical way due to the lack of resource of the community. This was found to be utilized to reposition the community-led scheme so that it conforms to wider city needs. This has significant resonance for our understanding of how community-led schemes function in practice.

While self-organization has long been a political ideal, ongoing budget cuts and challenging conditions mean that self-organization and community leadership is responding to a variety of social and economic challenges (Uitermark, 2015). Yet, it is clear from this research that it is important to not only identify the social, economic and democratic potential of self-organization, but to explore its relationships with forms of governance and authority that may shape and influence its practice and contribution to societal challenges.

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